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ABSTRACT

Findings of a case study that examined teacher perceptions of the implementation of a destreaming program, the "Transition Years," in a secondary school in Ontario (Canada) are presented in this paper. Interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principal, and 11 teachers in the school, which was engaged in restructuring its middle grades. Findings indicate that most teachers supported the program, although for various reasons. Program outcomes were influenced by several factors--the social context, leadership and expertise, moral purpose, and change agentry. A new concept of the teacher's role is proposed, which links moral purpose and change agentry for affecting real social change. (Contains 12 references.) (LMI)

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TEACHER PURPOSE AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE: MOVING TOWARD A BROADER AGENDA

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In this paper we present a new conception[1] of the role of teachers in postmodern society — one that explicitly links moral purpose and change agentry (Fullan, 1993). We then explore a case study[2] of a large urban secondary school which faces daily the struggle to make major improvements under conditions of survival and moral purpose in attempting to make a difference in the lives of both students and teachers. It is not clear, given the enormity of the problems, whether this struggle will result in progress or retrogression, but the argument is that change agentry and moral purpose is the most powerful combination likely to make a breakthrough.

A fundamental problem in education is the juxtaposition of a school system which is not known for its capacity to change alongside a dynamic environment which demands continuous, multifaceted change. Until the educational system learns to deal with change as a basic capacity, there will be constant clashes and aggravation between education and other sectors in society. The educational system must become expert at dealing with educational change as a normal part of its work—not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life.

The reason that the educational system must develop this change capacity has to do with education's moral purpose: to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background, and to help citizens who can live and work productively in postmodern society. This is not new, but what is new is the realization that to do this puts teachers precisely in the business of continuous innovation and change. They are, in other words, in the business of making improvements, and to make improvements in an ever changing world is to contend with and manage change on an ongoing basis.

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[1] The introductory sections of this paper are adapted from *Productive Educational Change: Going Deeper*, by M. G. Fullan. It will be published by Falmer Press in 1993.

[2] We acknowledge the valuable assistance of Ann Vibert in conducting several interviews for this study.

Society expects citizens to be capable of dealing with change throughout life, both individually as well as collaboratively. Education is the only social institution with the potential to fundamentally contribute to this goal. Education has not been at all successful in teaching people to deal with change, and must begin to see itself and be seen as expert in the dynamics of change.

Educators—administrators and teachers alike—must become skilled change agents. If they do become skilled change agents with a moral purpose, educators will make a difference in the lives of students from all backgrounds, and by so doing help produce greater capacity in society to cope with change.

There are a number of constituent components necessary for productive educational change, but the most fundamental is the *organic linkage*—at the level of the individual teacher—of *moral purpose* and *change agentry* . These rather strange partners, on closer inspection, are natural companions: moral purpose without change agentry is so much wishful valuing, while change agentry without moral purpose is merely change for the sake of change.

Moral Purpose

Recent major studies of teaching and teacher education increasingly indicate the importance of understanding the moral purposes of education as a basic rationale for teaching. For instance, Goodlad (1990) identifies four moral imperatives of teaching in schools: facilitating critical enculturation; providing access to knowledge; building an effective teacher-student connection; and practicing good stewardship.

Sirotnik (1990) adds that "moral commitments to inquiry, knowledge, competence, caring, and social justice go...to the very heart of the moral ecology of the organization itself" (p. 312) and asks about the extent to which they are reflected in the work environments of educators:

> To what extent does the organizational culture encourage and support educators as inquirers into what they do and how they might do it better? To what extent do educators consume, critique, and produce knowledge? To what extent do they engage competently in discourse and action to improve the conditions, activities and outcomes, of schooling? To what extent do educators care about themselves and each other in the same way they care (or ought to care) about students? To what extent are educators empowered to participate authentically in pedagogical matters of fundamental importance — what schools are for and how teaching and learning can be aligned with this vision" (1990, p. 312).

And at the policy level, there are growing concerns about educational equity and economic performance which mirror the more particular issues just described. The restructuring movement, in intent at least, places a renewed focus on the education of *all* students, "especially those who have been ineffectively served in the past", and attempts to reorganize schools for that purpose (Murphy, 1991).

The personal moral purpose of the individual teacher is a critical building block for educational change. A recent study (Stiegelbauer, 1992) indicated a fairly widespread desire, as expressed on a profile completed by individuals entering a faculty of education, to make a difference in the lives of students. (Although making a difference was mentioned by students planning to teach at all grade levels, proportionately fewer prospective secondary teachers explicitly emphasized this theme.) Many things can happen to this sense of personal purpose during the course of a teaching career: those with a non-existent or limited sense of moral purpose may never be tested; those with moral potential, however inchoate, may never be developed; those with a clearer sense of purpose may be thwarted.

Among those teachers who do retain or develop their personal sense of moral purpose in teaching, there is a further danger. Aspects of moral purpose such as caring may be too narrowly conceived. Hargreaves and Tucker (1991) suggest that there is more to it than personal caring and interpersonal sharing: "Care...carries with it social and moral responsibilities as well as interpersonal ones" (p. 12)

Concerns for making a difference cannot remain at the one-to-one and classroom level. There is an additional requirement: making a difference must be explicitly recast in broader social and moral terms. It must be seen that one cannot make a difference at the interpersonal level unless the problem and solution are enlarged to encompass the conditions that surround teaching and the skills and actions that would be needed to make a difference. Without this additional and broader dimension the best of teachers will end up as moral martyrs. In brief, care must be linked to a broader social, public purpose, and the latter if it is to go anywhere must be propelled by change agentry.

Teachers can become agents of educational change and societal improvement. They are part way there on a small scale with their aspirations for making a difference. And they are there ecologically with expectations of reform constantly swirling around them. In addition to making moral purpose more explicit (thereby clearly declaring what business we are in) educators also need the tools to engage in change productively.

Change Agentry

Change agentry is defined as being self-conscious about the nature of change and the change process, as being appreciative of its semi-unpredictable and volatile character, and as explicitly being concerned with the pursuit of ideas and competencies for coping with and influencing more and more aspects of the process toward some desired set of ends.

The individual teacher of moral purpose needs to equip herself or himself with four core capacities in order to become a more effective change agent. The capacities required as a generative foundation for building greater change are: personal vision-building; inquiry; mastery; and collaboration. (Each of these has its institutional counterpart—shared vision-building; organizational structures, norms and practices of inquiry; focus on organizational development and know-how; and collaborative work

culture—and we need a dual approach which works simultaneously on individual and institutional development.)

The individual educator is a critical starting point because the leverage for change can be greater through the efforts of individuals; each educator has some control (more than is exercised) over what he or she does, because it is his or her own motives and skills that are in question. Moreover, working individually on the four capacities about to be described makes it inevitable that there will be plenty of intersection of effort. What is being considered here is not only leaders as change agents but something more basic: that each and every educator must strive to be an effective change agent.

The first capacity, personal vision-building, connects well with moral purpose. It means examining and re-examining, and making explicit to ourselves reasons for entering teaching and motives for staying there.

There are several key points about building personal vision:

- *it is the starting agenda:* it comes from within, gives meaning to work, and exists independently of the particular organization or group

- *it is often too implicit and dormant, and expressed negatively or narrowly:* we must also have positive images as driving forces

- *once it gets going, it is not as private as it sounds:* the more one takes the risk to express personal purpose, the more kindred spirits one will find, and individuals will find they can convert their own purposes into social agendas with others

- *it should be pushed and pushed until it makes a connection to the betterment of society:* that is what it is at the one-to-one teacher-student level anyway, and it has greater scope and meaning and calls for wider action if we realize that societal improvement is really what education is about

- *it should be recognized as a change theme:* that teachers above all are moral change agents in society, and should pursue this role explicitly

- *it is the route to organizational change:* when personal purpose is diminished we see groupthink and a stream of fragmented surface innovations, but when personal purpose is present in numbers it provides the power for deeper change

Personal vision-building and the other three capacities of change agentry are intimately interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The second one, inquiry, is necessary for forming personal purpose. While the latter comes from within, it must be fueled by information, ideas, dilemmas and other contentions in the environment. The beginner, by definition is not experienced enough with the variety and need of students and with the operational goals and dilemmas of improvement to have clear ideas of purpose. It is necessary for him or her to internalize norms, habits and techniques for continuous learning.

Lifelong inquiry is the generative characteristic needed because postmodern environments themselves are constantly changing. The relationship between the first two capacities—personal vision and inquiry—involves the ability to simultaneously *express and extend* what is valued by the individual. The genesis of change arises from this dynamic tension.

The capacity of mastery is another crucial ingredient. People must behave their way into new ideas, not just think their way into them. Mastery and competence are obviously necessary for effectiveness, but they are also *means* for (not just outcomes of) achieving deeper understanding. New mindsets arise from new mastery as much as the other way around. Mastery is very much interrelated with vision and inquiry.

It has long been known that skill and know-how are central to successful change, so it is surprising how little attention has been paid to it beyond one-shot workshops and disconnected training. Mastery involves strong initial teacher education, and continuous staff development throughout the career, but it is more than this when we place it in the perspective of comprehensive change agentry. It is a learning habit that permeates everything that is done. It is not enough to be exposed to new ideas, or to like these ideas. It is necessary too to know where they fit, and to become skilled in them.

Collaboration is the fourth capacity, essential both for personal learning and for organizational improvement (see also Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). There is a ceiling effect to how much can be learned if we keep to ourselves. The ability to collaborate—on both a small and large scale—is becoming one of the core requisites of postmodern society. Personal strength, as long as it is open minded (i.e., inquiry-oriented) goes hand-in-hand with effective collaboration—in fact, without personal strength it will be more form than content. People need one another to learn and to accomplish things. Without collaborative skills and relationships it is not possible to learn and to continue to learn as much as is needed to become an agent for societal improvement.

In sum, moral purpose and change agentry, far from being strange bedfellows, should be married. They keep each other honest. They fulfill each other. Moreover, together they are generative in that they have an inbuilt capacity to self-correct and to continually work at figuring out what should be done. Not only are they effective at getting things done, but they are good at getting the *right* things done. Separately, but especially in combination, they are as yet society's great untapped resources for improvement. They must be made explicit and be made part and parcel of personal and collective agendas, and doing so requires the capacities of change agentry.

Overview of Study

In this paper, we would like to discuss a group of teachers we interviewed in one of the schools (given the pseudonym Austen in this paper) which participated in a ten-case study of school culture and educational change. In this school, as in the others in the study, teachers and administrators were dealing with a number of innovations associated with the Transition Years, an initiative of the Ontario Ministry of Education which emphasizes the establishment of a core curriculum for grades 7 to 9, the elimination of streaming (tracking) in grade 9, and the improvement of support for students making the transition from elementary school to secondary school. In the study as a whole, particular attention was paid to destreaming.

Three features of this school particularly captured our attention. In the school, which has an extremely challenging social context, implementation of destreaming and the other Transition Years initiatives appeared to be proceeding more easily than in the other cases in the study. In the school, too, issues relating to the moral purpose of education emerged frequently in interviews with teachers, both when they talked about themselves as teachers and when they talked about the school as a whole. Finally, in the school, it was evident that personal purpose and vision was, for several people, indeed being recast in broader social and moral terms, and being linked to a broader agenda for societal improvement. In general, the school provided an excellent opportunity to look at moral purpose, change agentry, and the relationship between them.

At this time we will not be looking at all aspects of what was happening in the case of this school as it moved toward implementation of the Transition Years policy; we will not, for example, look in detail at leadership strategies, staff development, or planning for destreaming. We will focus chiefly on what people said about purpose and change, both in regard to themselves as individuals and in regard to their colleagues and the school as a whole.

The School and its Context

Austen Secondary School is a large composite school, offering a wide diversity of programs. Courses are offered—in more or less equal proportion—at Advanced and General levels. The school is mainly organized into traditional school subject departments, but because of the nature of the school, there are a number of exceptions to that organization. It has an extremely large English as a Second Language program, and ESL teachers, along with Guidance and Special Education staff, frequently work with teachers of other subjects in programming for particular students. Innovative programs in areas such as co-operative education and multicultural studies, and student support programs such as the Positive Peer Culture program have been in place for some time and encourage teachers to work with colleagues outside of traditional departmental boundaries.

The new grade 9 program designed in response to the Transition Years directions has generated movement away from the traditional secondary school structure, and organizational means have been found to have people from different subject departments who teach the same students meet together. Recently created positions—including coordinators for intermediate education, co-instruction, and equity—give these teachers wide responsibilities.

The school has been open for more than twenty years and has a very large plant: at one time, it accommodated 2400 students. At present, although physically well-maintained, its image as well as its enrolment has declined substantially; this is of great concern both to board and school administrators and to teachers. A majority of teachers responding to a Quality Assurance Survey in 1989-90 felt that the school did not provide a safe and secure learning environment, that discipline and attendance were extremely serious problems in the school, and that morale and school spirit were poor. (Despite that, nearly 80% indicated that teaching gives them personal satisfaction and nearly 60% that they liked teaching in the school.) Students completing the same survey were in agreement that there were serious problems in the school.

Approximately 1300 students were enrolled in the school at the time of the study (1990-91), and they represent over 60 cultural and ethnic groups. Thirty-eight percent of the students have been in Canada for less than five years. Seventy percent are not Canadian-born. One-third were born in countries where English is not the first language, and an additional one-quarter were born in the Caribbean. Student mobility is very high. The community served by Austen has changed profoundly, several times, over the years that the school has been open. Now it is among the most diverse in Metropolitan Toronto, which in turn is the most diverse city in Canada.

There have been radical changes in the school in the past few years–some deliberately undertaken, but many imposed by a variety of external forces. A School Review Team appointed by the Board of Education described the school in the spring of 1990 as follows.

Austen is a school in transition. The staff, administration and students are wrestling with several important concepts including a large multicultural population, semestering, destreaming, racism awareness, consolidation, a new administration, increased need to provide safety and security in the building and appropriate programming.

Our interview with the school principal suggested that from his perspective some of the key events and concerns of the past few years included:

-in 1988- 89 (the principal's first year)
- •serious problems regarding student retention, safety, failure rates
- •concern that school's being unsemestered seriously disadvantaged students
- •decisions to address attendance procedures, improve safety, examine evaluation issues, develop a mentorship home form program
- • decision to semester

-in 1989-90
- •implementation of board's consolidation policy (whereby grade 9 moved from being part of the junior high school to being part of the secondary school) resulted in 58% of students and 34% of the teachers being new to the school
- •increasingly serious problems with violence in the school made school safety an absolute priority
- • initial steps taken to increase safety in the school
- •board study of Quality Assurance conducted and School Review report written, giving recommendation for major change
- •planning for destreaming and other Transition Years initiatives to begin in 1990-91

-in 1990-91
- •implementation of destreamed grade 9 program in September
- •financial support through board's Transition Years pilot project
- •initial development of a major strategic plan to radically change school program delivery

Comments made by teachers we interviewed in this study offered a far more dramatic description of the events in the year preceding the School Review Team's visit and our study. From one:

> We had a dreadful year...it was ready to explode and the fact that nobody got killed or seriously injured is amazing. I found it a very, very stressful time and I'm usually regarded as very calm and easygoing...Last year by the time I got out of my car at the parking lot I was aware of who's in front of me, who's behind me. I wouldn't walk down the stairs with one of the kids, you know all the things I had heard of in other city schools or schools in New York or wherever. I was involved in three knife incidents in the first three months of the year.

And from another, describing the situation shortly after the entry of the 58% new students:

> Last year we had a group of grade nines come into our school, and I don't know why, they were hellians, they were bad trouble-making kids. They roamed in packs around the school, causing chaos. This was almost our first experience with grade nines. We were not prepared for them. I don't know if we thought grade nines would be little kids. They weren't little kids at all, they were big. It caused mayhem in the school.

Interview Study

Our observations are based on a series of interviews conducted primarily between November, 1990 and February, 1991. Interviews of between one and one and a half hours were conducted with: the principal and one vice-principal; the heads of guidance and special education; three persons with leadership responsibilities of particular importance for the Transition Years implementation (the coordinators of intermediate education, co-instruction, and equity); and six teachers representing a range of subject areas—English, family studies, French, geography, mathematics, and technological studies. Although in this paper, we will concentrate on what we heard from teachers (including heads and coordinators) about purpose and change, we will refer to

interviews with the principal and vice-principal for information about context and events.

In this case (as in all ten cases of this study), teachers were selected for interview either because they held a position of responsibility which was highly relevant to the Transition Years or because they represented one of the six subject areas listed above. The only criterion for selection of subject teachers was that they either had to be teaching grade 9 at the time of the study or have done so in the previous year; apart from that, selection within subject departments was random. Because when this school established its new destreamed grade 9 program for 1990-91, there had been considerable encouragement for department heads to be involved in the program, our sample at this school included a very high proportion of department heads. In addition to the two heads and three coordinators specified above, five department heads or associate heads were interviewed. That is, all but one (who had been a head in another school) of the teachers interviewed in our study currently held a position of responsibility.

The sample of 11 teachers interviewed, while similar in proportion to the 104-member teaching staff as a whole in terms of gender and race, differed from them in that they had been in teaching a little longer (17 years) than the school average (14 years) and been in this school for longer—three-quarters of the sample, in contrast to one-half of the school generally, had been there for six or more years. Three-quarters of the sample were between 40 and 50 years of age and, in the school as a whole, one-half were between these ages; in both cases, the other teachers were equally divided between under-40 and over-50. On the whole, the people we spoke to tended to be people who were committed to the work of the school and to staying there—only three explicitly mentioned plans to teach in another type of school in the future.

Interviews were semi-structured and questions related to three broad areas. Questions about *themselves as teachers* related to strengths and weaknesses, perspectives on their subject, background and experience, changes over time. Questions about the *school* related to its strengths and weaknesses, working relationships with colleagues, decision making, changes and new directions,

and professional development. Finally, questions about *destreaming and the Transition Years* in general related primarily to teachers' understanding of and attitudes towards these initiatives, and their assessment of how implementation was proceeding.

In this paper, we will by no means describe everything that teachers had to say about themselves, their schools and colleagues, and destreaming . Rather we will limit our focus primarily to what they had to say about purpose and change, and in some cases, about contextual influences on these.

Teacher Purpose

At the Individual Level

As the teachers talked about the personal meaning of teaching for them, the themes of making a difference, caring, and advocacy for students emerged most strongly. Every teacher mentioned these them in some way. This was in sharp contrast to Stiegelbauer's (1992) finding that while "making a difference" was mentioned by some teachers planning to teach secondary school, it was not nearly as prominent a theme as for those planning to teach elementary school, and much less prominent than themes such as serving as role models for students. Two of the teachers in our study said:

> The kids, and parents of this community in many cases because they're from immigrant families, are just starting the school experience and so our potential to make a difference to those kids and families is really quite incredible and it's quite an awesome responsibility...So the quality of the relationships we set up will determine their direction, it seems to me, for a very long time.

> I have one very major strength and that is my concern and caring for the kids and, as naive as that may sound, I will brag about that until my dying day. I truly believe that in...the things I do in teaching within my classroom and outside my classroom, my main concern is that the students get something out of it...I'm enhancing their self-image, feeling of worth, feeling of 'I'm valued for being me'...On any job application I have filed, I've put down as my strength, my first strength, 'student advocate'.

Caring about the students is closely allied to many teachers' personal enjoyment of seeing students succeed, and their liking for the students and their families—but it is more than that.

> I really like these kids from all around the world and all levels of society. I admire them a great deal too. These are nice people to be around. And even though there are troubles, the troubles are real chunks of life that should be addressed. And I like being here because I really think I can do something of value, real value. Whereas if I were teaching at X [a private school] or Y [another school in this public board], there are plenty of people who can teach there, and I really don't think there are plenty of teachers who can work at an Austen situation very happily or successfully for very long.

Although all teachers cared about their students, the precise form of their caring differed slightly among the group. While most teachers hoped to empower the students—so that they could make decisions, or have the confidence to try new things—or to open new doors for them, one regarded care, at least in part, as providing shelter from the pain of their lives. And while other teachers appeared to care equally about all students in their classes, one evidently gained most personal satisfaction from ensuring that the top students were successful.

Listening to what the teachers told us about their background and experience, and about changes in their philosophy and practices added to our understanding of the purposes in teaching. First of all, what was noticeable about the background and experience of the teachers interviewed was its breadth: nine of the eleven teachers had taught more than one subject; five had taught classes at the Basic level or Special Education classes as well as General and Advanced level ones; and three had taught in junior high schools.

It was very evident, also, that teachers felt they had changed markedly over the course of their teaching careers, partly as a result of the breadth of their experience and partly because of the particular experiences they had had in this and other schools.

Two major sorts of changes were described. One, closely related to the moral purpose of caring for students, had to do with a change in the relative importance of teaching a subject as opposed to teaching students. Little (1990) states that, "...over time, secondary teachers locate themselves both in relation to the intellectual traditions and priorities of a discipline and in relation to the lives of students and communities."(p. 200) . In Austen, all but two teachers referred to a personal change of becoming relatively less discipline-focused and relatively more student-focused, to seeing subject content or curriculum as a vehicle for "teaching kids". At the time we conducted our interviews, only one of the teachers appeared to have retained a strong attachment to a particular academic area.

The other type of change described by teachers focused more on how their teaching practices had changed on the basis of their experiences of what worked with the students they had encountered in Austen and elsewhere. To care for and be responsive to students' needs, they had had to change the way they taught. They seemed to have been discovering personal meaning and refining teaching approaches at the same time, in the manner described by Oakes (1992):

> ...new norms and new technologies inextricably intertwine. New ideas, examining values, understanding effects--all may pave the way for trying a new practice. New practices--acting differently--may permit new interpretations of experiences, i.e., new convictions about what is true, what is possible, what should be. (p. 18)

Two teachers' descriptions give a sense of this:

> I just sort of tumbled into teaching, I didn't have much philosophy. So I just taught for those first six or seven years the way I had been taught. My heart wasn't in it. I was very young, and was quite bored. I can't say I did a very good job except I showed up and was nice to the kids. I didn't see myself as imparting any knowledge, or that I had any great body of wisdom to tell. I supposed I was doing what I should do, standing up and telling things and doing definitions and spending thirty-eight minutes on one topic, having spent an hour and a half the night before trying to figure it out myself... But when I got more into the activity-based idea, and found out it was alright to sit down and try to figure out what they

> kids were doing and what they were trying to learn, and then more into a coaching mode, it was a blessed relief to me. And when I found out that it was really important that they have group skills and process skills and sort of what was going on in their own development as readers and writers and thinkers and talkers, more than anything I could tell them about the [other curriculum], that made sense to me.
>
> In my first year, I had five Basic classes, and it was rough. It was an eye opener. But I think the teacher makes a heck of a difference on whether the student is in school or skipping classes. Let's be very honest and look at the whole picture and not just lay it on the student. The thing is, we should be teaching things that are relevant for the students, not just things the Ministry has shipped down to us...Unless it's relevant, forget it. You know the white middle class, what have you, that I encountered at my previous school, it doesn't exist here. So unless I change my mindset to that, I'm not being an effective teacher.

At the School Level

In discussions about what the school on the whole does well — that is, moving from the individual level to the school culture level — there was clear agreement: it cares about kids. The same thing we had heard ourselves from individual interviews was cited as a strength of the school in general. Although most people told us of some teachers who were in the school to escape pressures from students' parents or who lacked the courage to leave, the general perception was that what the school does particularly well is:

> ...care for kids. Now we have our exceptions, but I think that by and large the people here are good at nurturing some pretty prickly kids in situations.

From another staff member:

> Austen has a collection of very caring staff. Not all. I think that as an outsider, a parent, you should know that sending a child here, that child will get as good an education as at any other academy or collegiate institute, and perhaps get a little more caring and perhaps a little more involvement from those who are in administration.

There was clear agreement too that the school is good at problem solving and changing , changing in response to the needs of its students as these were understood by most teachers. Again there were exceptions, stories of teachers who were bitter and angry because they were unable to change curriculum or instructional techniques to meet student needs, but in general:

> ...another thing that people do...over the years the staff in this school has been prepared to change and there have been a lot of program initiatives coming out of the school over the years. And I think it's because people see evidence of things not working so they look to see 'How can we do it better?'

> The greatest accomplishment of this school, as a school, with all its disparities and polarizations, is its willingness to look inside, within, for some of the problems and not to throw up its arms and say, 'It's the community that we live in.' We're responding to the community. This is our environment. I think we're saying 'What do we need to do to change, to respond to the needs of this particular community from the principal on down to those of us that are working in the classroom?'

There was much less agreement, however, about how the school should deal with another kind of change, the more fundamental change required to alter the conditions surrounding schooling and to *really* make a difference in the lives of all students. Equity has been much discussed as an issue in the school, and "anti-racist education", one major initiative to move towards equity, was at the time we visited extremely divisive.

Recasting in Broader Terms

As we listened to the talk about equity and anti-racist education in the school, we became aware that there were some teachers who not only talked of moral purpose in their individual classrooms with their own students, but also had indicated a deliberate intention to work towards a broader agenda for social change.

The linkage of moral purpose to *strategies for change* was evident, but not explicit or fully developed. Several of these teachers had worked on cross-departmental initiatives which had an explicit social change agenda. For instance, some had been part of the "Role of the Reader" committee, which deals with evaluating, for possible racial or sexual biases, textbooks in various disciplines. Others had worked on the Racism Awareness committee which had sponsored events such as African History Month in the school. There was a clear sense that they felt they were working in an important direction:

> ...I guess with the kids we have here, we just have an enormous range of abilities and an enormous range of backgrounds, and if there's going to be some problems we'll run into them. I guess the people who hang around in a school like this, there's two or three different kinds of reasons, but a lot of people really want to try to do something. So it leads you to change or question what you're doing anyway.

These teachers were engaged in learning and inquiry, taking advantage of professional development opportunities, often being among the first in their school to take courses in areas such as cooperative learning and conflict management. They appeared to actively enjoy learning:

> If I can become more effective in a classroom and try new methods, then that's great...The principal's course I took, that turned me on. I realize some members of the department and school are not interested, it's just a job. And it's obvious in the way that they come across to kids...If you can get people turned on to kids, turned on to change, this is what we're hoping, and I'm very enthusiastic about it...I'm carving out my own interests and I'm enjoying it. The day that I don't enjoy it is the day that I stop.

They tended too to display a marked interest in learning more about the lives and experiences of, for example, the immigrant and refugee students they taught.

Most of these teachers displayed mastery of some aspects of the "new technologies" needed for change—in this particular case the technologies needed for destreaming or detracking. These technologies encompass "the organizational, curricular, and pedagogical strategies required to provide diverse groups of students with access to a common body of knowledge"

(Oakes, 1992, p. 10) and include, centrally, expertise regarding cooperative group learning and regarding broader and more sensitive approaches to student assessment.

The teachers who displayed these "change agent" capacities also had had substantial experiences with collaboration. Like many other teachers in their board, they were part of a staff development initiative which stressed peer coaching. Some had been engaged in collaborative program design and planning within their own departments. In addition, many had worked on cross-departmental tasks and committees dealing with matters such as student evaluation and discipline. One teacher, discussing a large school-community initiative, pointed out the necessary tie between equity and collaboration:

> At a school like this it's critical that we look at the equity issue and that we listen carefully to everyone, and that we provide equity of opportunity...And that means making sure that our committees are representative of concerns, of language, of race, of ethnic background—and if you're not collaborative, you can't do that.

Several of these teachers were conscious of the social change process in which they were participating at Austen. One, well aware of both its importance and its difficulty, mentioned the danger that changes could be too shallow, with more attention being paid to high-profile appointments and committees than to actual teaching practices or ways of relating to students.

> And the work [of changing curriculum and instruction] is enormous, and it's hard to change, hard to change your ideas, and so much easier to keep doing what you have always done. And I would hate to be part of just a surface improvement...[But] here there is real change. When you've got the range of abilities in your classroom, no surface change is going to do anything there.

This teacher continued, talking about destreaming in the school:

> I think this admin are committed to really changing the way we do it and how we evaluate it and how we plan it, and, you know, fundamental changes in what we do...I think if anything will cause a real change, this will.

Implementing Destreaming

Progress and Outcomes

At the time we conducted most of the teacher interviews, a destreamed program had been in operation for five or six months. It was part of the implementation of a new grade 9 program intended to address the key recommendations of the Transition Years—destreaming, developing a core structure and curriculum, and improving support for the transition into high school. A program development committee—25 volunteers from across the departments with sub-committees to consider skills, outcomes, transition, orientation, and guidance—had worked hard to prepare for the first year of the program. The first-year program that they put into place was cored in terms of structure; groups of 20 students travelled together. In the first year, they had not been able to have staff members teach two subjects, as originally hoped, or to build interdisciplinary curricula; these were directions they hoped to take in the next year.

Destreaming and other grade 9 innovations were only part of what was happening in the school mid-way through the 1990-91 school year. The staff was widely engaged in developing a new strategic plan for the school. In general there was a positive climate in the school—"a sense of hope and momentum within the faculty" (Lieberman, Darling-Hammond, and Zuckerman, 1991, p. 35). There was a sense that since the School Review in the spring of 1990, the school had turned a corner:

> It started when the administration put together a...restructuring process that involved defining new directions for the school, identifying concerns that staff had in a very systematic kind of way, and setting some direction for the future....There have also been initiatives implemented by administration in the building to take control of and share responsibility for discipline. There have been a series of meetings with students to clarify student behavior and expectations.....a vast majority [of staff] view that as positive and supportive, and for that reason they are much happier and feel much more secure in their role as teachers, so that, in addition to

> what seems to be a pretty systematic process related to redesigning the structure of the school, has turned the place around.

Most of the 11 teachers we interviewed, as well as being on side with the overall direction being taken in the school, were in strong support of the destreaming initiative itself. Two had concerns with how it would affect the top students, and two were aware of how thorny the matter of evaluation would be. Apart from that, their feeling was that it was long overdue, and would serve their students much better. Although one referred to some polarization of other teachers around the issue, most reported that it was going reasonably well, that "teachers are responding with real professionalism and enthusiasm" and "it's happening, it's better than anyone anticipated".

The reasons for their support of destreaming and the Transition Years initiatives, and for the acceptance they saw from many colleagues, were varied. Some mentioned, as reasons for favoring destreaming, improved support for students through more personal contact with a smaller number of people, and some that destreaming would keep doors open longer for students. For others, destreaming and the Transition Years was really about changes in instructional practices:

> ...we're not talking just about destreaming; we're talking about implementing the best teaching strategies...And about staff development, taking senior secondary school teachers that haven't got the bag of tricks that most elementary teachers have...We're really talking about excellent teaching and individualizing school programs.

Some of the teachers accepted destreaming because it was seen as not a very big change, as not very different from their current arrangement—they were used to classes which combined Advanced and General students. Other teachers welcomed it precisely because it *was* such a big change—a much better way to make a difference in the lives of students, and to produce significant change in the direction of equity: "We were so committed to destreaming, because for us it was an equity issue—that's the driving force for us."

Several months into the program, teacher comments included: liking the fact that the grade 9 teachers worked as a team, liking the fact that class sizes were smaller, and being aware that how well a destreamed class went depended on the precise mixture and balance of student. Early impressions of the grade 9 program outcomes for students from those interviewed were positive—there were reports of "an awful lot of student learning", better grades, and enhanced self-esteem.

One Year Later

Shortly before our teacher interviews in the winter of 1991, we had spoken to the principal and vice-principal about the strategies associated with introducing destreaming and the Transition Years, and asked about how things seemed to be going at a very early stage in the process. At that point, they thought that all seemed to be going fairly smoothly, plans were proceeding for a more cored and integrated program for 1991-92, and all staff, regardless of their starting points, appeared to have moved along the continuum towards at least acceptance and belief than they could deliver the destreamed program in the appropriate way.

In the early spring of 1992, we spoke briefly once more with school administrators. The 1991-92 school year had, in contrast to 1990-91, been quite a difficult one again. However, they regarded the new grade 9 program as "an absolute success—given the challenges". The components of the program had become more closely integrated, so that a variety of skills were being valued and developed. Courses were taught in four packages of four components; for instance, one package includes mathematics, science, drafting and geography. There was considerable progress towards developing integrated approaches to student outcomes and integrated units of study. Teachers have gained confidence in their own abilities, and those of their colleagues, to deliver a destreamed and integrated program. Students have had a better exposure in terms of what is expected across all of the disciplines, and have had much more personal attention and individualization of program.

On our return visit, we had hoped to find clear indicators, for instance in terms of student achievement or retention, of the new grade 9 program's effect on students. In fact, we did not find that clarity—partly because we were too early to have access to statistics being collected by a board of education research project, and partly because the school was still wrestling with the problem of finding accurate indicators of effectiveness.

Although when one talks to students, there is a strong sense of improved self-esteem, more contact with teachers, and strong liking for their programs, the usual more quantitative measures may not reflect what is really taking place. In a school with extremely high student mobility, it is nearly impossible to track students to monitor whether they are staying in school to a greater degree. In a school with many students who don't know much English, comparisons with student achievement in other schools is pointless. And in a school where there is tremendous variability among the student populations from one year to the next, comparing results across years may be deceptive. What is apparent is that the way the program is structured (one-half credit for each of the 16 components in the grade 9 program) allows students to obtain more credits than under the previous system; this in turn is expected to influence student retention.

Explanatory Factors

A fuller understanding of what is happening with respect to destreaming, the Transition Years, and other changes at Austen of course requires much more than the kind of study we have been reporting here. In fact, several other studies of Austen have been, and are currently being, undertaken by both school board and university researchers.

Our study has looked only at a small group of staff, at a particular point in time, and has focused primarily on the area of teacher purpose as it relates to change in the school. Several sorts of factors which relate to this purpose appear to have been extremely important influences on the particular course that implementation of destreaming has taken.

One set of factors had to do with the *social context*—partly because it had over the years shaped moral purpose of teaching for many of the people we talked to, and partly because it had become so challenging (and indeed frightening to some people) that something simply had to be done to accommodate the needs of both students and teachers.

Another set had to do with the *leadership and expertise* of the administrators in the school. There were some very clear strengths: their own commitment to making a difference, their knowledge of intermediate programming, their understanding of the importance of staff development and the resources necessary to assist with change, and their willingness to share decision-making about the school's future with anyone who was interested. One of the teachers told us:

> I have in my twenty plus years of teaching never felt quite so empowered to be part of the decision-making process. If I wish I can be a member of the steering committee that will probably determine the future of this school and how its policies will be laid out. A second-year teacher could do the same.

The final set of factors involved, and the one that we have focused on here had to do with *moral purpose* and, to some extent, the skills of *change agentry* displayed by some of the staff at the school.

These sets of factors came together in a particular way at Austen. We think it was partly teachers' understanding of the moral purpose of destreaming and the Transition Years that allowed these initiatives to "...'take' much more easily and rapidly...and [be] perceived as enabling" (Bascia, 1992, p. 12) in this school. Not only did teachers feel empowered by the initiatives and their underlying philosophy of equity, but also many (not all) felt clearly empowered and supported by their administration.

We think, too, that the administrators in the school had important understandings about teacher purpose and educational change. They knew the strengths both of the overall school culture, with its valuing of care and responsiveness to changing student needs, and of the individual teachers who were working hard to blend change agentry with moral purpose and bring about fundamental social change.

They also knew that, among the most important lessons of making educational change, were the following:

> New ideas of any worth to be effective require an indepth understanding, and the development of skill and commitment to make them work. You cannot mandate these things. The only alternative that works is creating conditions that enable, and press[ing] people to consider personal and shared visions, and skill development through practice over time.
> (Fullan, 1993)

> ...even shared vision recognized as central to reform is better conceptualized as a journey in which people's sense of purpose is identified, considered, and continuously shaped and reshaped.
> (Fullan and Miles, 1992)

Conclusion

Austen Secondary School does not illustrate explicit and advanced forms of expressing moral purpose and working on comprehensive change strategies at the level of individual teachers and their link to curricular and organizational restructuring. It does, however, show incipient forms of the presence of both moral purpose and change agentry—enough to conclude that developing these lines of inquiry and action will be productive, indeed essential, as the restructuring of schooling in postmodern society unfolds.

We believe that making explicit moral purpose (the context of improvement) and change agentry (the structure, skills and processes of how to accomplish change individually and collectively) represent vital untapped resources for rethinking the role of teachers, and indeed the role of education in societal improvement. Such rethinking has major implications for redesigning schools, school districts, their relationship to their environments, and for massive restructuring of teacher education (Fullan, 1993). The change agenda for the future must revisit the age-old problem of whether the educational system is a passive reflection of society, or an active agent of societal change.

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